

Real Live Preacher: A Look at the Bible & Homosexuality

- A Response -

This is a response to the [Real Live Preacher](#) and his postings on homosexuality and Christianity...

[A Look at the Bible & Homosexuality](#) and [I Have No Title for This](#)

All quotes from RLP's original post are in blue, my responses are in black.

"I am your worst nightmare, a Texas preacher who knows The Book better than you do.

Perhaps... and perhaps not.

You cannot wave your unread bible and scare me. I know its larger story and I will tear you a new biblical asshole."

I don't want to make a character judgment, but... pride goeth before a fall. I've spent a great deal of time reading the Bible. I too am a "real live preacher", and I think that this statement alone provides sufficient evidence that the starting attitude is in the wrong place.

However, let us just use a little common sense and reason together about what RLP (Real Live Preacher) has presented in his "sermon"...

Setting aside RLP's affinity to poetic prose... let's address what he really has to say in this article. He argues from three perspectives: Hypocrisy, The Bible and Homosexuality, and Exegesis.

Hypocrisy

"If Christians were honest, they would admit that they do not abide by all the commandments of scripture themselves. I don't mean we try and fail. I mean we deliberately choose to ignore scriptures that are not convenient for our lifestyle."

This is the definition of sin - willful disobedience. A true believer *will* admit to sinfulness:

1 John 1:8-10 (ESV)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

I admit it, I sin and much of the time I do it knowingly... but I must never claim that such willful disobedience is pleasing or “okay” with God as though He smiles knowingly down on us and chuckles at our blatant rebellion. That’s not the God I see in the Old Testament and it’s not the God I see in Jesus or presented by the writers of the Epistles. Contemporary culture doesn’t change the God of the Bible, no matter how hard we may try.

“I think we should afford our homosexual brothers and sisters the same luxury. Perhaps we should offer them space at our bonfire to burn their little handful of scriptures as we burn the bible chapter and verse.”

The logic behind RLP’s statements is terribly faulty. First he claims that all Christians are tossing aside or burning Scripture because it’s inconvenient to us. That is just not true. Not all of us toss Scripture aside and say “it’s okay because it’s inconvenient” - we admit that we are sinful and breaking God’s law, we do our best to turn from our sin in repentance and we fall. We may reason from the Bible what is a cultural teaching and what is moral teaching. But we do not simply “toss aside” Scripture.

And even if you insist that we are still tossing Scripture aside, is it not false logic to say, “I am doing something wrong and God is displeased, therefore it’s okay for everyone else to do wrong also. Let everyone do wrong so that we may please God.” In the words of Paul, “By no means!”

Romans 6:1-2 (ESV)

Rom 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

Rom 6:2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Shouldn’t I instead say, “I am doing wrong... let me work on changing my wrongdoing and help lead others to change as well.” Rather, shouldn’t I in love speak the truth of God to all people with the desire to help them grow and become pleasing to God? Not that it is my job to beat them into submission or proclaim eternal damnation on them - but that I am held accountable by God (regardless of my sinful state) to speak the whole message of hope in the Gospel which includes the message that it is God’s will in Christ to *change* our lives.

Hypocrisy is wrong... as believers we must fight it every day. The fact remains that to some degree we are all hypocrites. We all sin, and yet God expects us to “practice righteousness (living right in the eyes of God)” and “love our brother” ([1 John 3:10](#)). If we truly love our brother we will reach out in love and help teach him/her to practice righteousness as well. To do otherwise is not to love our brother, but to show contempt and lead him/her astray. Regardless of our own sinfulness, we must speak the truth - but we must also act in love. We cannot do one without doing the other - Jesus never did.

The Bible and Homosexuality

“The bible never addresses the subject of homosexuality. The idea of sexual identity was not a part of human thought until very recently. The bible addresses some specific homosexual acts in very specific contexts.

The idea of two people in a loving, committed homosexual relationship was not understood in the ancient Hebrew world and is not a subject in the bible.”

Why do people keep parroting this garbage? They must think no one ever had sex before the mid 20th century! Take a good look at the Song of Solomon in the Bible, examine the archaeological remains of the cultures of ancient Egypt and Eastern Asia of the Greeks and Romans. The statement that “sexual identity was not a part of human thought until recently” is ignorance at its finest.

The best that could be argued is that homosexuality was never considered a **valid** sexual identity before recent times. Just so we’re all on the same page, that doesn’t argue in favor of homosexuality. We don’t define the acceptable morality, God does - and God has been clear that homosexuality is not acceptable.

For example, if our culture eventually decides it’s okay to kill off the mentally retarded at birth - that won’t make it okay in the eyes of God. It will still be murder. In the same way, just because people are more accepting of homosexuality today, it doesn’t make it okay in the eyes of God. Both are moral - not cultural issues. When culture clashes with the moral teachings of Scripture... culture must always lose - at least for the believer.

“Very credible biblical scholars treat the passages in question as specific commands against specific acts, and not as a wholesale prohibition on a homosexual orientation.”

If they’re so credible... tell us who they are. I’ve seen very “credible” (according to the world’s standards) Biblical scholars claim that Jesus didn’t raise in a physical body though Scripture clearly contradicts it ([John 20:24-29](#)), that the whole story of Jesus is just truth couched in mythology (see [Rudolf Bultmann](#)), and that you must be a member of the Holy Catholic Church to be allowed into Heaven. None of which, by the way, does Scripture support. Even if you could produce a “credible” theologian who justifies such a point of view - the mere association of his/her name with that belief means nothing unless Scripture plainly supports the argument.

Exegesis

RLP goes on in this section to address six passages of Scripture dealing with homosexuality. Let’s have a look.

“The story of the destruction of Sodom - Genesis 19:1-29. If you read this story, you’ll quickly see that the men of the city of Sodom wanted to commit a brutal, homosexual

rape... Any reasonable person will understand that this passage has nothing to say about loving, consensual homosexual relationships.”

Any reasonable person would examine the context beyond the specific Scripture passage they cite as evidence:

Gen 18:20-23

God was planning on destroying the city long before the actual event described in chapter 19 occurred. Why? Because “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous...” Abraham confirms this was God’s intent by his question in verse 23, “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” God was destroying Sodom for their great wickedness... not for a single event described in verse 19. That event was an example of the great wickedness of Sodom. The mention of the fact that they initially demanded the men instead of Lot’s daughters indicates that this was an example of the *degree* to which their wickedness had sunk. They had plumbed the depths of sexual immorality and they had reached the point of not only sexual immorality, but also homosexual rape.”

Now, what does the New Testament have to say about this immorality mentioned of Sodom:

Jude 1:7

...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

The people of Sodom were “sexually immoral” and pursued “unnatural desire”. The word translated unnatural means “different” - it is also translated “other flesh”. It is the same root as that of heterosexual - sexual orientation to the “different/other” sex. In the same way the desire of those at Sodom and Gomorrah was “different” from the normal desire - and appears to be a desire different even from the “sexual immorality” just mentioned. The translation as “other flesh” also clearly indicates that they were seeking “other flesh” than the previously mentioned sexual immorality. While not conclusive, there is little doubt that the writer almost certainly intended homosexuality.

“Judges 19:1-30 is a sad story of human evil of the type that are often recounted in scripture. It is basically a retelling of the Sodom story in a different context. This time, however, the men actually did rape a woman. This passage speaks to the need for God’s love in a brutal world. It has no bearing on the question of homosexual orientation for the same reason that the Sodom story is not applicable. Both of these stories condemn ignorance and sexual brutality, but not homosexuality.”

The next passage cited - Judges 19 - is difficult to directly apply in discussion on the morality of homosexuality, except in the sense that it is a negative portrayal of homosexual activity. It does not describe a judgment for the actions, nor does it describe a pronouncement by God.

Neither is it a “retelling” of the story of Sodom in a different context. Aside from the differences mentioned in the previous paragraph, a thorough reading will provide clear evidence that - though there are obvious parallels - many of the details and the intent of the narrative is different. This is not a pronouncement and execution of judgment by God. It is an illustration of the wickedness of the Benjamites (a tribe of Israel) showing that they had become just as wicked as Sodom. Please note also that the concubine - who was the only one actually assaulted - was an *unfaithful* concubine.

I would also add that verses 23-24 may give us a clue as to the view of the culture on homosexuality.

Judges 19:23-24

“The owner of the house went outside and said to them, “No, my friends, don’t be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don’t do this disgraceful thing. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don’t do such a disgraceful thing.”

If we take the text as it is, in the eyes of the host it was apparently only a “disgraceful” thing to rape the man, not the woman. The concubine was a guest as well - so the argument of hospitality seems somewhat difficult to claim. It seems also that the disgrace was not just in the violence of the act - the host was willing to have violence committed against his virgin daughter and the female concubine - but in the fact that it was to be perpetrated against the male. This implies one of three conclusions: 1.) that the male was the only important person in the culture, 2.) that the issue was homosexuality or 3.) both. I would argue that the twice repeated use of the word “disgraceful” (also translated vile, outrageous, villainy) indicates that the issue was probably both - particularly since a distinction is made between the sexes “but to this **man**, don’t do such a disgraceful thing.” But there is no way to be sure.

He then goes on to flippantly dismiss [Leviticus 18:22](#) and [Leviticus 20:13](#):

Leviticus 18:22 (ESV)

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13 (ESV)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

with the following casual statement,

“The code of rules and behaviors in Leviticus does not apply to Christians. No Christian group I know demands full compliance with this ancient code of behavior. If we did we would have to keep kosher laws. We don’t even demand compliance with the sexual rules in Leviticus. If we did, we would allow polygamy, which is lawful in Leviticus. Unless you are prepared to obey all the rules in Leviticus, you cannot blame the homosexual for not feeling bound to obey them. To point to these two verses and demand selective compliance is ludicrous.”

Apparently there a misunderstanding of the concept of moral laws and ceremonial laws. There is a distinct difference. If we are not to abide by the moral (apart from the ceremonial) code of the Old Testament, why then does the church at Jerusalem feel the need (with the agreement of Paul) to write the following in their letter to the Gentiles ([Acts 15:19-30](#)):

Acts 15:28-29

“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

Apparently, if we feel no need to abide by the moral code of the Old Testament - let us toss aside the constraints of sexual immorality in general. If this is what RLP suggests - it is clearly contrary to Scripture.

As regards the comments about allowing polygamy according to the Old Testament moral code, let us distinguish between commandments, prohibitions and an allowances (or permissions). The code made an allowance for polygamy, it does not say that polygamy was a commandment or even morally right . In fact, we can see in the Genesis creation account that quite the opposite was intended. God made many allowances in the Old Testament code. However a prohibition is a different matter. A prohibition - unless countered by an allowance - is not to be violated.

Commandments must be followed. Prohibitions must not be violated. Allowances or permissions, on the other hand, can be further restricted. Jesus demonstrated this in the Beatitudes by his “you have heard it said... but I say to you...” statements. He expanded the meaning of those commands even to the point of claiming that looking on a woman with lust was the equivalent of adultery.

Finally, please note that both verses in Leviticus use the word “abomination” to describe homosexual behavior! The word here translated from the Septuagint “abomination” means “detestable thing” - “anything that must not be brought before God because it arouses his wrath.” (A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Bauer, Gingrich and Danker). This is clearly a moral command if ever one was made in the Old Testament. Homosexuality is “detestable” to God. It is sin.

“Jesus had nothing to say on the subject of homosexuality. His absence of comment does not support or condemn homosexuality. As I’ve noted, the idea of sexual orientation was not a part of human thinking. It’s not surprising that Jesus never addressed what was not an issue.”

And as the Bible (and history) illustrates, homosexuality was clearly understood and addressed in the Bible. However, it was likely so unspeakable and unacceptable in the average Jewish mind that the largest percentage of people *knew* that it was wrong! People really must stop making these obviously false statements that somehow people - whose law clearly addressed homosexuality and who were well aware of the sexual immorality in the surrounding pagan culture - were somehow ignorant of the concept.

Jesus probably didn't address the issue of homosexuality because he was speaking to Jewish people who knew that it was an *abomination* to God - instead he addressed the issues that were prevalent among the common Jewish people and the Pharisees: adultery, hatred and murder, pride, slander and theft. Remember, Jesus came first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Jesus usually didn't even address Gentile issues but spent most of his time among Jewish communities.

I Corinthians 6:9 - "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders"

"Male prostitutes and homosexual offenders. Can someone explain to me why we would condemn an entire orientation because of the prohibition of these specific acts?"

Whoa, reign in your horses right there partner. The word used to indicate homosexuality in this verse clearly denotes homosexual behavior in general - not just specific acts associated with it. The word itself is transliterated (*arsenokoitai*) coming from the root "arsen" meaning "man" and "koite" meaning "bed" or "sexual intercourse". It is not limited to male prostitutes or whatever RLP means by homosexual offender - which would, by the way, include all homosexuals as the act of homosexuality was prohibited by the Jewish law. (Bauer, Gingrich, Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*)

"The Greek words Paul used in this passage include the word for a young, effeminate male prostitute and the word for the older man who paid to have sex with him."

Ahem... let us be very clear. While the word does "include" the meaning indicated by RLP (as it would include the meaning of an adult male and adult male having sexual intercourse or in the generic sex - an adult female and an adult female) - it is in absolutely **no way** limited or restricted to it. Its primary meaning is "a male who practices homosexuality" - no more no less. It can also mean a "pederast" (pedophile) or - ironically enough - a "sodomite".

"We can acknowledge that the bible condemns prostitution and a system where a younger man makes his living committing sex acts for money with older men. But we cannot condemn homosexuality in general because homosexual prostitution was condemned."

Why should we acknowledge that male prostitution is any more wrong than homosexuality... or heterosexual prostitution for that matter? The Bible speaks to both, if we're going to toss away one, we might as well toss away the other. And while we're at it, we can relegate the usage of our Bibles to coffee table books or really inconvenient paper-weights.

"Paul condemns many heterosexual acts in his writings, even in this very verse, yet we do not condemn homosexuality."

Paul condemns many *immoral* heterosexual acts: prostitution, adultery, orgies, etc... (Gal 5:19-21, Romans 13:13). He never condemns heterosexuality. The Bible never condemns heterosexuality anywhere. Quite the contrary, “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 9:1, etc...), “let each man have his own wife” (1 Cor 7:2), “do not deprive one another... except for a time... for prayer” (1 Cor 7:5). Whereas, we can clearly see in Leviticus, 1 Corinthians and the first chapter of Romans that it *does* condemn homosexuality.

“Romans 1:18-29 is the single most important passage dealing with homosexual acts. It is the one most often quoted and it is clearly the closest thing we find to condemnation. Verse 27 is the most specific verse.

...

I don't know exactly what Paul meant by this passage. I know he was describing people who chose not to worship God and then “burned with lust for other men.” I don't know exactly what he meant, but I know this DOES NOT describe the homosexual Christians I know, who love God with great passion and are quietly committed to each other.”

I say this with the most sincere love and genuine concern; we *do* know what this verse means. It is clear to 99 readers out of 100. Just because we don't like what it says, doesn't change what it means. It is not for me to judge the homosexual who puts his/her faith in Jesus with respect to eternity. I believe that homosexuals have the same opportunity to salvation as any other sinner like myself. But I also know the following passage of scripture...

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

Regarding those brothers who are living a blatant sinful lifestyle (including homosexuality) without repentance and with no desire to change, Scripture is clear that we are not to have them as part of our fellowship. The church of which I am a part practices church discipline... it's not an easy thing to do - but it is what the Bible demands. It is not with joy or satisfaction that I say these things. I have known several homosexuals in my lifetime, counted a few as friends - but it doesn't change what the Bible says. And it isn't for the sake of punishment that we are commanded to do this, but for the sake of saving that person's relationship with God:

1 Corinthians 5:5

“you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”

Paul himself says that this is not directed at unbelievers... we are called to reach out to those who are homosexual unbelievers as much as to those who are heterosexual. But not

with the intent of making them feel that they are justified to live in sin, but rather to show them love and compassion - and share with them that they can be justified in Jesus Christ and that he will help them change their lives to be more what he wants them to be. That goes for homosexuals, pornography addicts, drug addicts, murderers, the envious, the proud, and all the rest of us sinners.

But what we must not do is tell people that their sin is okay with God... that somehow He doesn't mind. As a matter of fact, He minds a great deal. He minded so much that there was absolutely no way for us to have any hope unless he came in human flesh, died and was raised to life again.

[“Would you at least agree that the passages are ambiguous and open to many interpretations? Would you at least agree that others may responsibly interpret them and not agree with you?”](#)

The passages regarding homosexuality *are not* ambiguous as has been demonstrated. There are many issues which are ambiguous - those dealing with homosexuality are not.

[“If you could at least acknowledge that scripture is far from clear on this subject, then perhaps you would be willing to err on the side of compassion. Perhaps you would be willing to open your churches to our homosexual brothers and sisters, trusting them to read the bible just as you do, with love and hoping for Grace from God.”](#)

I hope to always err on the side of compassion. But compassion is not just in making others feel good about themselves, but instead helping them move towards what God wants of them - holiness, righteousness, purity. It's difficult to see how we can do that by telling people it's okay to continue to live in sin. I hope to do everything that I do out of love for those around me, but sometimes love means honesty - and honesty hurts, not because we want it to but because that's what honesty does sometimes - and so sometimes love hurts.

But I must first love my God with all my heart, mind and soul... and loving God means being honest with His Word. And I cannot sacrifice that for any amount of feel-good religious talk. I will love those around me with as much as is in me, but I will be honest with God and honest with those who seek Him. To be otherwise is foolishness, it sets itself up in the way of God's plan and purpose, and it is the equivalent of telling God that He is wrong. I hope that my fear of God always outweighs my fear of any man's opinion.

I would never steal the hope of the grace of God from anyone, God forbid! But neither will I present false hope as if it were true. Which is worse - to tell a person of their sin and lovingly help them to accept their need for a Savior or allow them to die in rebellion and reap their eternal consequence?